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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to gather data on declines in foreign language enrollment at Union County College (UCC) and other New Jersey two-year colleges and to identify means by which foreign language offerings might be enhanced. Surveys were sent to the 18 New Jersey two-year colleges besides UCC, requesting information on enrollments between 1994 and 1997 in foreign language classes, curricula at the colleges that required a foreign language, alternative delivery methods, and any innovative ideas for attracting students. Completed questionnaires were received from seven of the colleges. In addition, UCC Institutional Research and state enrollment reports were reviewed to determine trends. The study found that the decrease in foreign language enrollment at UCC could be attributable to decreases in county population, especially in the college-age group; increases in Hispanic and Blacks with low levels of academic preparedness; and increasing numbers of transfer students who do not take foreign languages before transferring. Recommendations developed from the study for improving language offerings at UCC included the following: (1) make use of interactive television to provide distance language courses; (2) create more courses that meet the needs of Spanish-speaking students, such as Latin American Literature in Spanish; and (3) encourage more community outreach programs in foreign languages, such as study abroad. The survey instrument is appended. (BCY)

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Foreign Languages at New Jersey Two-Year Colleges

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Issues of Education at Community Colleges: Essays by Fellows in the Mid-Career Fellowship Program at Princeton University

JC 970 414

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George R. Willard

Foreign Languages at New Jersey Two-Year Colleges

In a recent article from the New York Times, a survey of 2,772 two- and four-year colleges in the United States shows that traditionally taught foreign languages such as French, German and Italian showed a decline in enrollment between 1990 and 1995: French, -25%; German, -28%; Italian, -12%. During the same five year period, Chinese, Arabic and Spanish showed an increase in enrollment: Chinese, 36%; Arabic, 28%; Spanish, 14%. At Union County College betwee 1990 and 1995, French, German and Italian showed a greater decrease-- -46.3%; -30.5%; -23.1%; -6.3% respectively--than the decrease shown at the two-and four-year colleges cited in the Honan New York Times study, showed an increase of 14%, while at Union, it showed a decrease of -2.5% (See Attachment #1).

The main purpose of this study is to show what enrollment trends have occurred in foreign languages during the last three years at Union County College and at the seven other community colleges in New Jersey who responded to the questionnaire and are contained within the present study (See Attachment #2). Further, it is a goal of particular importance to the present writer to try to discern why foreign languages enrollments are declining at Union County College. Finally, the most important goal of this study is to identify means by which the community colleges can enhance their foreign language offerings and can work in concert to expand offerings in traditionally-taught languages such as French, German,

Italian and Spanish as well as less traditionally-taught languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

The information contained within this study is from several sources: first, a questionnaire was created and sent to the 18 other community colleges (See attachment #4.) Its purpose was, in part, to trace foreign language enrollments over the last three academic years. The questionnaire also included questions to the respondents about various alternative types of language courses such as telecollege courses and travel abroad programs. Information about enrollments in less traditionally-taught courses such as Latin, Polish, Arabic, Hebrew, etc. was requested. Respondents were asked to provide information about curricula at their institution that required a foreign language. Finally, they were asked to include information about innovative ideas that might lead to attract, retain and stimulate student interest in languages. A second source of information for this study was provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning of Union County College. Additionally, the New Jersey Fact Book and Directory showed enrollment trends of the full-time and part-time students over recent years at all 19 of the New Jersey two-year colleges.

The issue as to why Union and three of the other seven community colleges contained within this study showed an overall enrollment loss during the past three academic years in an important one; of equal importance is the issue as to why three of the community colleges in the study showed gains in overall language enrollment. It is not, however, the purpose of this study to speculate as to

the reasons for increases and decreases in foreign language enrollment at the seven other responding community colleges. Because of the many years of involvement of the present writer at Union, and because of the sense of total willingness and cooperation of the Director and Staff of the Office of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning to provide relevant and up-to-date information for this study, it is to Union that the speculation will be limited in regards to the overall decline in language enrollments. The final phase of this study will include recommendations for maintaining and expanding foreign language enrollments at all of the community colleges.

In an effort to understand why foreign language enrollments are decreasing at Union County College, one needs to look at the population demographics of the county: in 1980, 504,094 people resided in Union County; in 1990, 493,819, and the projection for 2000 shows a population of 495,500, a very slight increase over 1990 (Union County College, Strategic Plan, p. 46.) A statistic that impacts even more heavily on Union County College enrollments is that the population aged 19 or less has decreased 35% over the past 20 years, dand the population of those between the ages of 20 and 24 has decreased significantly as well. The only age group that has increased in population is the 65+ category (Union County College, Strategic Plan, p. 49.) It is clear that the loss of population, especially of the traditional college-age students 18-24, will cause a decrease in total college enrollment, and it will also cause a decrease in the number of students studying foreign lan-

guages. An additional factor in the loss of foreign language students is the racial and ethnic changes that have occurred in the county during the last 30 years. In 1970, there were 439,185 White residents in Union County, and there were 60,723 Black residents. In 1990, the White population had decreased to 322,247; the Black population had increased to 91,678. During the same twenty-year period, the Hispanic and Asian population increased from 43,208 to 111,501 (Strategic Plan, p. 50.) In summary, the decrease in the number of students studying foreign languages at Union College is attributable to several factors: the decrease in the county population; especially in the college-age group; the increase in Hispanics and Blacks whose academic preparedness level impact negatively upon foreign language enrollments, especially French, German and Italian. An additional concern is that there needs to be made a more concentrated effort to provide opportunities for Spanish-speakers to take courses appropriate for them--i.e. Spanish for Hispanics and Latin American Literature courses. This problem will be addressed further in the section of recommendations for maintaining and increasing foreign language enrollments.

A related problem in maintaining language enrollments lies in the area of students who are already enrolled at the College. One of the most telling and important studies conducted by the Office of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning

Fall 1990, Fall 1991 and Fall 1992. It traces their progress during a three-year period While the number of students who graduate from the College withing each three-year period increased from 12.6% during the 1990 to 1993 period to 14.1% during the 1992 to 1995 period, the most significant statistic which seems to have the greatest impact on foreign language enrollments is the number so-called "transfers" (student who transfer to another college before acquiring a degree from Union. The number of these transfer students for each three-year period increased dramatically. For the 1990-1993 cohort, transfers comprised 6.8% of the first group; for the 1991-1994 cohort, transfes comprised 10.9%; for the most recent group, 1992-1995, transfers comprised 15% of the group. These figures have a double impact on foreign languages. First, students who do not earn a degree in Liberal Arts generally do not take a foreign language. Second, increasing numbers of four-year colleges do not require foreign languages for admission. Therefore, if a student decides to transfer before earning his A.A. Degree, and he/she transfers to an institution which does not require a language, he/she will not pursue foreign language study at Union.

Now that some of the contributing factors have been identified that have caused enrollment declines in Modern Languages at Union County College, the further and more meaningful objective of this study becomes to suggest and to implement, where possible, the changes that would help to reverse this enrollment trend. The following recommendations do not offer any facile answers but

rather suggest the need for innovative ideas and a new sense of cooperation among the faculty and staff of the various educational institutions within Union County and among the state community colleges.

The first recommendation involves Interactive Television .. operates by means of fiber optics withing a Interactive Distance Learning System. This new technology allows the teacher to reach students at other sites via a television hook up. It also permits students at other sites to see and interact with the teacher and all of students at all the interconnected sites. The possibilities for teaching foreign language to two two or three locations augers well for languages. As an example, Union College has three campuses: Cranford, Elizabeth and Plainfield. One of the problems faced by language courses is meeting the minimum enrollment requirement of 15 students for each class. It is difficult to run three classes of same level language courses on all three campuses. With an Interactive Television set up, the course could be taught on one of the campuses and have sufficient enrollments to make a class with the requisite number of fifteen. Currently, Spanish is being taught to students at Warren County Vocational School from Linden High School. The possibilities for connections between Union and the Union County high schools would offer advantages to both the College and the high schools. This sort of interaction could also be effected among community colleges. One area of great potential involves teaching non-traditional languages. It may be noted in Attachment #3, Table 4 that Japanese is taught at College

8. With an Interactive Television connection, other community colleges could connect to College 8 in order to receive Japanese. Polish, Arabic and Chinese are taught with small enrollments at a few of the colleges. Other colleges could hook up to a site where these languages are taught.

A second recommendation to increase foreign language offerings and enrollment at Union is the idea of creating more courses to the specific needs and interests of the Spanish-speaking population. As has been seen in the Strategic Plan, the Hispanic and Asian population of Union County has increased from 60,723 in 1970 to 79,979 in 1980 and to 82,380 in 1990 and is projected to be 111,501 by 2000 (Strategic Plan, p. 50.) The Modern Language Faculty needs to offer courses like Spanish for Hispanics and Latin American Literature to the Spanish-speaking citizens. Further, there is a need to offer these courses on the Elizabeth Campusd or at least to make these courses accessible to students on all three campuses in order to insure offering all students equal access and to reach minimum course enrollment requirements.

A third and final recommendation is to encourage more community outreach programs in foreign languages. It is of singular importance to note that of the eight community colleges, only Union offers travel abroad courses. This is an area where Union has done an outstanding for the past 30 years. This year, as an example, a trip to Spain was offered for credit or non-credit depending on the needs of the students. In May we are offering a trip to French-speaking Canada. Twenty-five people have already signed up. The course is offered jointly by the English/Fine Arts/Modern Languages Department and the Economics/History/Government Department. Stu-

dents may enroll for foreign language credit or may earn credit in Government. What is important is that many of the students are not enrolled at Union; they come from diverse groups such as senior citizens, the Board of Trustees and other individuals who are interested in a travel-vacation. This travel course fulfills two important recommendations of this study: the need to cooperate with other academic departments within Union and the need to appeal to non-traditional students, thereby increasing language enrollments and serving the community.

As a final observation and summary, it is the belief of this writer that each faculty member needs to monitor enrollment trends within his/her discipline. At community colleges like Union, where enrollments are decreasing and the so-called "traditional" students are not as numerous as in past years, this is particularly important. The author recalls with nostalgia when languages were required in all liberal arts curricula. Union ran 3 or 4 section of Advanced Spanish. This year it didn't run because lack of sufficient enrollment. Presently, the same phenomenon is occurring among many of the "sophomore-level" courses, due, in part, to declining enrollments in many areas. The focus of the present study has been to trace foreign language enrollments at Union and at the seven other community colleges and to try to point out the causes for enrollment declines. The declines are partly due to county population loss, the loss of "traditional" students, and the problem of "transfer' students who; leave without earning a degree. Although the figures are not readily available, another factor in the loss of students may b the competition from four-year colleges who accept students who might ordinarily have enrolled in the community

colleges. Among the recommendations made, it seems essential to utilize new technologies such a Interactive Television so that low-enrollment courses can be offered on more than one campus or at more than one college. It is a further recommendation that Union enhance offerings in travel courses and courses for specific ethnic groups to meet the needs and aspirations of the diverse segments of the county not seeking credit nor following a specific adademic program. Not all of the Union County constituency is degree-driven. Union County College and the other 18 community colleges in New Jersey need to make a concentrated effort to attract and retain foreign language students. It is hoped that the present study will help to meet this need.

References Cited

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2. Office of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning, Union County College. Annual Institutional Development Courses Effectiveness Report Union County College, Fall 1984 to Spring 1986; and other dates.

3. Office of Institutional Research, Evaluation and Planning, Union County College. Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act Report for UCC, 7/1/96.

4. Parish, Richard. (Ed.) N J County College Fact Book and Directory Fifth Edition, July 1996.

5. Union County College. Union County College Strategic Plan 1995-96 to 1997-98.

Attachment #1

FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENTS PERCENTAGE INCREASES IN FALL 1990 AND 1995, FROM A SURVEY OF 2,772 TWO-AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES IN THE UNITED STATES COMPARED WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENTS AT UNION COUNTY COLLEGE:

2,772 two-and four-year colleges		Union County College	
1. Chinese	+36%	Not offered	
2. Arabic	+28%	Not offered	
3. French	-25%	French	-46.3%
4. German	-28%	German	-30.5%
5. Italian	-12%	Italian	-23.1
6. Spanish	+14%	Spanish	-2.5%

Attachment # 2

TABLE 3:

TOTAL MODERN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENT AT RESPONDING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

COLLEGE +	971 = 964	961 + 954	951 +944	AY 96-97 AY 95-96	AY 95-96 AY 94-95
1.	1001	1101	1186	-9.1%	-7.2%
2.	1952	N/A/	N/A	N/A	N/A
3.	301	309	388	-2.6%	-20.4%
4.	231	246	302	-6.1%	-18.5%
5.	1034	971	N/A	+6.5%	N/A
6.	349	317	285	+10.1%	+11.2%
7.	899	869	929	+3.4%	-6.5%
8.	1905	1840	1865	+3.5%	-1.3%

PERCENTAGE INCREASE/DECRREASE BETWEEN ACADEMIC YEARS

ATTACHMENT #3
TABLE 4:

MODERN LANGUAGE ENROLLMENTS; PERCENTAGE INCREASE/DECREASE IN THE MOST COMMONLY TAUGHT MODERN LANGUAGES BETWEEN ACADEMIC YEARS*

	ENROLLMENT AY 96-97	ENROLLMENT AY 95-96	ENROLLMENT AY 94-95	ENROLLMENT INCREASE/DECREASE 95-96--96-97; 94-95--95-96	PERCENTAGE INCREASE/DECREASE 95-96--96-97 94-95--95-96
COLLEGE 1: (Union)					
FRENCH	116	142	164	-26; -22	-18.3%; -13.4%
ITALIAN	117	137	115	-20; -22	-14.6%; -19.1%
SPANISH	754	786	859	-32; -73	-4.1%; -8.5%
COLLEGE 2:					
FRENCH	425	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
ITALIAN	235	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SPANISH	1158	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
COLLEGE 3:					
FRENCH	41	19	29	+22; -10	+115.7%; -34.5%
SPANISH	260	290	345	-30; -55	-10.3%; -16%
COLLEGE 4:					
SPANISH	198	202	228	-2; -26	-1.0%; -11.4%
COLLEGE 5:					
FRENCH	107	121	N/A	-14; N/A	-11.6%; N/A
ITALIAN	91	79	N/A	+12; N/A	+15.2%; N/A
SPANISH	762	796	N/A	-34; N/A	-4.3%; N/A
COLLEGE 6:					
SPANISH	293	215	225	+78; -10	+ 36.3%; -4.4%
COLLEGE 7:					
FRENCH	106	110	114	-4; +4	-3.6%; -3.5%
ITALIAN	97	92	57	+5; +35	+5.4%; +61.4%
SPANISH	644	606	519	+38; +87	+6.3%; +16.8%
COLLEGE 8:					
FRENCH	224	226	214	-2; +12	-0.9%; -5.6%
GERMAN	142	128	139	+14; -11	+10.9%; -7.9%
ITALIAN	179	173	193	+6; -20	+3.0 %; -10.4%
JAPANESE	43	34	48	+9; -14	+26.5%; -29.7%
SPANISH	1150	1124	1156	+26; -32	+2.3%; -2.8%

N/A = Responding institution did not provide this information.

* = Languages with fewer than 40 students enrolled during the academic year 1996-1997 are not included in the enrollment figures.

Attachment 4a

QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING MODERN LANGUAGES AT NEW JERSEY COMMUNITY COLLEGES

1. Name of your institution_____

2. Name of the individual(s) providing this information_____

3. Please list all of the foreign languages offered for credit at your institution (not including E.S.L.):

1._____ 5._____

2._____ 6._____

3._____ 7._____

4._____ 8._____

4. Please list the number of sections and total enrollment for each language offered for credit during each semester listed:

Spring 1997 (971):

Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish	_____	_____
2. French	_____	_____
3. Italian	_____	_____
4. German	_____	_____
5. _____ (other)	_____	_____
6. _____ (other)	_____	_____

Fall Semester 1996 (964)

Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish	_____	_____
2. French	_____	_____
3. Italian	_____	_____
4. German	_____	_____
5. _____ (other)	_____	_____
6. _____ (other)	_____	_____

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Attachment 40

Spring Semester 1996 (961) Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish		
2. French		
3. Italian		
4. German		
5. _____ (other)		
6. _____ (other)		

Fall 1995 Semester (954) Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish		
2. French		
3. Italian		
4. German		
5. _____ (other)		
6. _____ (other)		

Spring 1995 Semester (951) Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish		
2. French		
3. Italian		
4. German		
5. _____ (other)		
6. _____ (other)		

Attachment 4c

Fall 1994 Semester (944) Language	Sections	Total Enrollment
1. Spanish	_____	_____
2. French	_____	_____
3. Italian	_____	_____
4. German	_____	_____
5. _____ (other)	_____	_____
6. _____ (other)	_____	_____

5. Does your college offer any telecollege courses ? _____Yes ____No
If "yes", in what languages and what is the enrollment in each course?

6. Does your college offer any travel courses or study abroad program?
_____Yes _____No. If "yes", in what languages, and what is the enrollment in each course?

7. Does your college require foreign languages curricula, and if so, please list curricula in which languages are required.

8. Please list any innovative techniques that you may use to attract, retain or interest students in foreign languages.

9. Thank you for your attention and time. If you would like a copy of the results of this survey, please indicate your name and mailing address below:

Name: _____

College: _____

Address: _____